



Farmington River News



We have so much to tell you—please take a look! Thanks for being a true Farmington River friend.

Issues and Activities in the Farmington River Watershed

Wrapping up Summer 2021 and Looking Forward

This year was filled with new challenges. We all slowly stepped back into working with volunteers and partners at live events and in the outdoors once COVID restrictions were lifted. Our water quality sampling season was super busy with a full return to sampling three segments of the watershed: Massachusetts, Upper Farmington and Lower Farmington. We redeployed HOBOS (in-stream temperature monitors) in the watershed and had new stream locations started in partnership with Farmington Valley Trout Unlimited. We also engaged in a 9-week nutrient and bacteria sampling program at Rainbow Reservoir looking to monitor for Cyanobacteria and the nutrients that support the blooms.

This ambitious summer program had its challenges. We were forced to monitor river flows and adjust our schedule countless times due to high precipitation storm events. But we also started a new program monitoring for Cyanobacteria on Rainbow Reservoir which included nearly weekly jaunts on a motorboat. We finished up our National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant with additional plants in our Rockwell Park garden and workshops (both virtual and in person) on Natural Lawn Care and River-Friendly Landscaping. We hosted a booth at the Bristol Farmers Market and handed out free downspout disconnect kits to area residents. We also finished our National Park Foundation grant with native/pollinator gardens at People’s State Forest and in Winsted.

Now, with Summer 2021 behind us, we begin to plan for next year. We have exciting prospects for the coming year including a recently awarded CT DEEP 319 grant for \$179,000 for water quality improvements in Bristol and a new water monitoring initiative called Salt Watch with the Izaak Walton League of America. Also, dive into this newsletter to learn about our Annual Meeting featuring CT DEEP Commissioner Katie Dykes and our 4th Annual Wild & Scenic Film Festival.



Top to bottom: Floodwaters overflowing the spillway at the Colebrook Dam and Heather and Paige motor-boating on Rainbow Reservoir during Cyanobacteria sampling.





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FRWA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and protection of the Farmington River and its Watershed through research, education, and advocacy.

www.frwa.org

**FRWA Annual Meeting
Friday, November 12th**

6:30-7:30 PM via Zoom

Register online at frwa.org/am2021

Join us as we welcome our Keynote Speaker, Katie S. Dykes, Commissioner of the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP). Commissioner Dykes was nominated by Governor Ned Lamont to serve as the Commissioner of DEEP. Katie previously served as Chair of the Connecticut Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA), and as Deputy Commissioner for Energy at Connecticut DEEP from 2012-2015. From 2014-2017, Katie served as the Chair of the Board of Directors of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, Inc. (RGGI), a multi-state effort focused on reducing carbon emissions from electric generating facilities. She previously served as Deputy General Counsel for the White House Council on Environmental Quality and as a Legal Advisor to the General Counsel for the U.S. Department of Energy. She is a graduate of Yale College and the Yale Law School. FRWA is honored to have Commissioner Dykes speak about Ecological Stewardship at our Annual Meeting!



AGENDA

- President's Message, Michael Feldman
- Keynote Speaker, Katie S. Dykes
- Programs Update, Aimee Petras
- The "River People's" Photo Montage, Rick Wartors
- Frey Property, Susan Barney
- Treasurer's Report, Brian Freeman
- Election of Board Members, Robin Baran

Everyone Welcome! No Admission Fee!

Register for FRWA's Annual Meeting at frwa.org/am2021

Fall Riversmart Activities

FRWA is always encouraging our supporters to be 'RiverSmart' but what does that mean this time of year? What are some RiverSmart activities we can do today?

Lawn Care: Fall is a great time to get your yard in shape and be RiverSmart. You can get a soil test, overseed your turf areas, and mow over your fallen leaves to process them so they can easily break down into the soil. A soil test might reveal that now would be a good time to apply lime on you soil to raise the pH for turfgrasses.

Landscaping: Add some native plants to your landscaping. Native plants are beneficial in many ways, they host native insect populations, provide food for birds and other wildlife, and require less care and maintenance than non-native species. Also, planting in the fall is a less stressful time for plants. Go get those last minute shrubs from your local garden center.

Plan for the Future: Consider researching what your next RiverSmart Action would be over the Winter. Research a permeable patio project or how to add a rain garden to your landscaping. Go organic with lawn care and quit using chemical fertilizers and pesticides products on your lawn or upgrade your lawn irrigation system to a smart system that takes precipitation into account in the schedule. Add a rain barrel to your downspouts or divert your roof runoff to absorb into your lawn instead of the street toward storm drains.

Read more at RiverSmartCT.org.



FRWA 4th Annual Wild & Scenic Film Festival

Friday, November 19th

7:00—9:00 PM Hybrid Event

FRWA is thrilled to bring the greater Farmington River Watershed community together for our 4th Annual Wild & Scenic Film Festival. This year, you can either live-stream the event from the comfort of your own couch or attend in person at the Canton Town Hall Auditorium. Please join us Friday from 7-9 PM on November 19th for an array of environmental films that will leave you inspired. This event is a benefit for FRWA and proceeds support the work we are doing to protect your river.

What are we celebrating? 62 miles of the Farmington River and Salmon Brook are Wild & Scenic! In 1994, a 14-mile stretch of the West Branch Farmington River from Hartland to Canton became federally-designated. In 2019, the Lower Farmington River from Burlington to Windsor and the Salmon Brook received designation. This is quite the accomplishment - and we are proud of it! Come celebrate with us and learn about FRWA's work on behalf of the river.

Festival goers will receive a link to watch the live streaming film program with an online chat from the comfort and safety of your own home with your family. If you missed any of the films, you will have the opportunity to watch them as Video on Demand for 5 days after the live event.

Both the virtual option and the live event have doors opening at 6:30 PM and the show starts at 7:00 PM. Virtually, there is an interactive live chat. Our live event will be held at the Canton Town Hall Auditorium.

More information and tickets online at frwa.org/filmfest

Tickets starting at \$20 ~ Doors open at 6:30 PM

Raffle items from local businesses ~ Video on Demand 5 days after the live event



Thank You To Our Film Festival Sponsors



**Farmington River
Coordinating Committee**



**Lower Farmington River
and Salmon Brook
WILD & SCENIC**



FELDMAN, PERLSTEIN & GREENE LLC
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Salt Watch

FRWA is partnering with The Izaak Walton League of America on their volunteer program for monitoring road salt (sodium chloride) contamination in local water bodies.

Why monitor for salt in local waterbodies?

Road salt (sodium chloride) is everywhere during winter months. It keeps us safe on roads and sidewalks, but it can also pose a threat to fish and wildlife as well as human health.

Fish and bugs that live in freshwater streams can't survive in extra salty water. And many of us (more than 118 million Americans) depend on local streams for drinking water. Water treatment plants are not equipped to filter out the extra salt, so it can end up in your tap water and even corrode your pipes.

You can help.

Do you or someone you know have a stream running through your property or nearby? By taking the Salt Watch Pledge, they will send you a FREE kit with everything you need to find out whether road salt pollution is a problem in your local stream. Your data will be uploaded to their website and will provide important information on the health of our watershed.

To learn more about this initiative, or to become a citizen scientist take the Salt Watch Pledge and get your free kit visit Saltwatch.org.



Stream-Crossing Assessments

After playing it safe in 2020, FRWA is back to work assessing culverts at road-stream crossings. These assessments allow us to identify crossings that may impede passage of migratory fish such as shad and salmon. FRWA is also able to share our information with municipalities, which allows us to flag crossings that may be prone to failure during flood events. This year, Paige and Heather completed surveying stream crossing assessments in New Hartford, and FRWA has submitted a report of our findings from all 160 crossings to the town. This year, we started monitoring in both the upper and lower Farmington River thanks to the Farmington River Coordinating Committee and the Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook Wild & Scenic Committee. A total of 102 assessments have been submitted so far in the 2021 season in New Hartford, Burlington, and the Cherry Brook watershed in Canton. All data is uploaded to the NAACC Data Center at streamcontinuity.org.



A double culvert with some clogged fencing.



Macroinvertebrate volunteers examining a stream.

Macro-Invertebrate Sampling

FRWA participated once again this year in the CT DEEP RBV (Riffle Bioassessment by Volunteers) program. By sampling in shallow, rocky streams, we study the types, number, and diversity of aquatic macroinvertebrates in order to get a better indication of water quality. These small creatures spend all of their time in the water, so the information that we can garner from RBV sampling is similar to asking them, "What is it like to live in your neighborhood?" Results help FRWA and the CT DEEP identify high-quality streams and monitor water quality changes in the watershed, and data informs an online annual report by CT DEEP. This year we had the pleasure of officially training nine new volunteers for RBV sampling, and we were able to provide several educational riffle bioassessments for eager citizen scientists in local schools, scout troops, and at the Farmington Valley Trout Unlimited annual picnic.



FRWA Bacteria Monitoring

Despite the challenges of COVID-19 and frequent deluge over the 2021 sampling season, FRWA staff and volunteers were once again able to monitor 55 E. coli sampling sites. We currently have seventeen sampling sites in Massachusetts and thirty-eight throughout the watershed in Connecticut. We extend our gratitude once again to the USGS for processing our samples, which we would not have been able to analyze ourselves this year. FRWA staff plans on crafting a very persuasive letter to Santa this year for our very own laboratory.



Tracking Temperature Changes in Our Rivers and Streams

Early in the summer, we retrieved our "HOBO" temperature sensors, downloaded temperature data that was gathered from June 2020 to June 2021, and then redeployed fresh HOBOS that will log continuous temperature data until next summer. The HOBOS remain submerged year round recording in-stream temperatures every hour around the clock. Our data is shared with CT DEEP and uploaded annually to the SHEDS Stream Temperature Database, which can be accessed at Db.ecosheds.org/viewer. The data is available for use by scientists everywhere. In 2020, 8 sites were monitored, and in 2021 we added 5 more HOBOS for a total of 13. Three of our new HOBOS were deployed in partnership with Farmington Valley Trout Unlimited, and we partnered with MacLean Game Refuge to deploy the remaining two.

Monitoring Cyanobacteria in Rainbow Reservoir

Rainbow Reservoir is located in Windsor, CT, and it is a popular recreation area for local residents. FRWA has been able to partner with CT DEEP, limnologist Dr. Ken Wagner, and Camp Shalom this summer to monitor for cyanobacteria blooms upstream of Rainbow Dam. These blooms have been spotted in recent years, and they are potentially toxic to humans and pets. During the sampling season FRWA staff members monitored various water quality parameters at 5 sites along the reservoir channel in an effort to determine potential sources of excess nutrients. Data is still being analyzed, and it will be published on our website.



Taking a water sample from deep in Rainbow Reservoir using a Van Dorn water sampler.

Cyanobacteria are single-celled organisms that, like algae, require sunlight and nutrients to create food. When nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus become too high, these bacteria outcompete the healthy algal populations, resulting in a bloom. Excessive nutrients can come from sediments at the bottom of a waterbody, or they can be a result of polluted stormwater runoff. You can find more information about cyanobacteria on frwa.org.



Taking water depth and water visibility reading with the Secchi Disk.

What do we know so far?

Sediment samples taken from the bottom of the reservoir contain low levels of immobilized phosphate, which indicates that watershed inputs are the main contributor. Rainbow Reservoir receives input from the entire Farmington River Watershed. That's a lot of nutrients to carry! Treatment options will be considered after all data is reviewed, but there are preventative measures that we can all take in the meantime. Visit riversmartct.org today to find out how you can help to reduce polluted stormwater runoff and help Rainbow Reservoir to remain a healthy and safe place to enjoy nature.



“Simsbury River People” Making a Difference, One Community at a Time By Rick Warters, new FRWA Board Member

It all began with, “I was thinking...” Betty, my neighbor, called me in April and observed, “All through this pandemic, so many people have been trapped inside and we’re so lucky to have this beautiful river right in our backyards. I was thinking maybe some of us who live on the river could get together to find a way to give something back and make a difference for the watershed here in Simsbury.” When asked if they would support a grass roots effort by a group of people who live along the river, the FRWA responded enthusiastically. We came to understand that the Farmington River flows through 33 towns in both Massachusetts and Connecticut and, try though they may, the three resident staffers just can’t be everywhere. Expanding the FRWA’s reach and impact requires the thinking and effort of members and volunteers.

In May, about eight neighbors representing three generations from Terry’s Plain and Riverside Roads and representatives from FRWA’s staff and Board of Directors gathered to discuss the possibilities. The objective was clear; we were a community of neighbors focused on raising awareness of what Simsbury residents can do to protect and preserve the river that runs through our town. We were the Simsbury River People.

The “what” was clear from the beginning. Now the tough part; how to make a difference. We brainstormed and built off one another’s ideas. For our first project, we decided to create a display for what has been one of the largest annual events in town – SeptemberFest (re-imagined as SeptemberFeast for 2021). We didn’t want to sit behind tables hoping passers-by would take our literature. We wanted to invite people in – to engage, educate, and inspire action right then and there.

We divided and conquered the workload. There would be three walls to fill inside a 10’ x 10’ tent. A wall of art and poetry was created to draw people in. The second started with, “What is a watershed?” and went on to impress the importance of the river for the people, environment, and economies of the towns in the Farmington River valley and beyond. And the third wall was the call to action. We focused on the River Smart Pledge and membership in the FRWA as immediate steps for individuals to make a difference – steps that also made them eligible for a drawing for one of four baskets of environmentally sensitive products.

As a result of the event, dozens of new people have taken the RiverSmart Pledge, identifying the specific steps they will take in their daily lives to help our watershed. And the FRWA also has a new modular display and all its content is available for use in part or in whole at other events in other towns along the river.

As for the Simsbury River People, we met last week to discuss lessons learned from the event, celebrate our first success, and to identify the next steps we will take in our quest to help our community better protect, preserve, and restore the wild and scenic treasure that runs through our backyards.

Contact the FRWA staff to learn more about how you can become involved.





We Don't Do This Work Alone—Thank You for Your Continued Support!

Thanks to the generosity of FRWA's donors and supporters, FRWA is heading into 2022 strong and with new programs. Our new 2022 CT DEEP 319 grant will allow us to continue our partnerships in the City of Bristol and expand on the work we do educating our community about the watershed.

And a big thank you to our helpers!

Much of the work we do would not be possible without those who are willing to donate their time. We extend our sincere thanks to all of our volunteers who helped with water quality monitoring for "weathering" through this challenging season, and to those who helped make our 34th Annual Farmington River Clean-Up such a success.

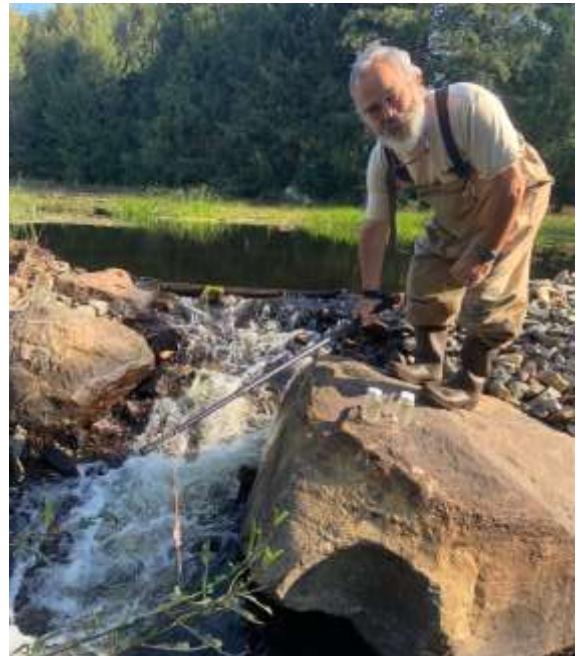
We are fortunate to have a community of dedicated volunteers, advocates, and donors who pitch in. Our current grant support includes the Werth Family Foundation, the National Park Foundation, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and we would not have their support without the longtime support of members like you. Better days are on the way. Please continue your support by filling out the form below or by donating online!

Approximately 1/3 of FRWA's budget comes from the support of people like you reading this newsletter. Please continue your support by filling out the form below or by donating online!

And Thank you!



Top to bottom: River clean up volunteers in Tariffville Gorge, and David Sinish, FRWA Board member, safely taking a temperature reading in fast flowing water.



FRWA Donation Form

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Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

Check one: **I want to donate now:**
 \$50 \$75 \$150 \$250 \$500 \$_____ other amount

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Please send to: Farmington River Watershed Association, 749 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT 06070
Credit card donations may be submitted online at www.frwa.org via our secure online contributions server.



The Farmington River Watershed Association
749 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT 06070

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Protecting The Farmington River, For You, For All, Forever.

FRWA Annual Meeting Invitation Inside!
Join Us Virtually November 12, 6:30 –7:30 PM
FRWA Annual Meeting featuring CT DEEP Commissioner Katie Dykes

FRWA Fall 2021 Events

November 12
November 19

FRWA Annual Meeting featuring CT DEEP Commissioner Katie Dykes —details inside
Live and Virtual Wild and Scenic Film Festival—details inside

Visit FRWA.org for the entire list of events and registration requirements or check our Facebook page.

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